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THE SMALL COLLEGE AS A FACTOR IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MUSICAL NATION

By ARTHUR L. MANCHESTER

I

FALLOW GROUND

It has been said that we are in the midst of a period of musical reconstruction. The use of music during the war demonstrated its popular qualities and strengthened convictions regarding its social, spiritual and physical values. But opinions differ as to the definite musical influence of the outburst of song which marked the musical activities of the war period. Whatever views one may entertain regarding this point, it must be conceded that some degree of progress was certainly made; for the spontaneous mass-singing incited by this movement involved many groups of people who had never sung before, awakening in them a love for music-making whose influence as a factor in musical development cannot be otherwise than stimulating. However small the direct musical results accruing from this mass-singing may have been, this indirect benefit is significant, constituting an entering wedge for further advance and attracting attention to music as a forceful element in our national life.

The incitement to extraordinary effort, engendered by war-time activities, has now lost its initiatory power. We are settling back into former paths of routine. In this resumption of former habits of activity and thought there is great danger that the musical impetus gained be lost and the beginning so well made end in a return to earlier apathetic indifference. It is obvious that, if we would build upon the foundation of enthusiasm generated by these wartime activities, the spirit so aroused must be intensified and given a trend that will lead to a permanent musical uplift. There are at work agencies designed to accomplish these results. Music is receiving a measure of publicity that is astonishing to older members of the musical profession. The voluminous programs of community bureaus and women's clubs are stimulating the physical, mental and social reactions aroused

by the war. These things have a popular appeal and cultivate a field which no other agency can touch so well. They enlist entire communities in definite musical activities and keep alive, and increase, a love for actual music-making. But their power to develop the musical knowledge and deeper musical appreciation on which a music-loving nation must be founded is distinctly limited. Such knowledge and appreciation is the product of sound music education which can be attained only by means of processes of musical training similar to those employed in producing an intelligent citizenship. Just as the embryo citizen is taken in hand by the public schools and encouraged to continue his studies through the high school and college, securing a systematic and broadly conceived knowledge of history, mathematics, literature, science and other subjects which discipline his mind, broaden his outlook, and touch, as far as possible, every phase of his later life, so, also, should he be taught music. To become a music-loving and musically appreciative nation our people must know more of music than can be learned from the singing of popular songs and the comparatively superficial performances of bands and orchestras in the way possible in ordinary community activities. As a point of departure these things are commendable, but unless they are an incitation to a desire for a larger and more thorough acquaintance with the nature and possibilities of music they fall far short of the goal in developing a musical nation.

To give permanence to the interest they awake and to insure further progress they must be supplemented by such educational facilities as will afford widest opportunity for the acquirement of the necessary knowledge of music as a science and an art. Every possible medium should be organized and made readily available for the accomplishment of this purpose. There already exist in organized form facilities for developing a comprehensive system of popular music education which can utilize the greatest publicity music has ever known and crystallize the enthusiasm fostered by community bureaus and the activities of women's clubs. Among the most potential of these agencies are the many colleges, ideally located in every section of the country, if their relationship to the work of music education can be made so clear and their responsibility for its successful accomplishment be so strongly impressed upon them that they will make a conscientious effort to meet the obligation. Their effective participation in such a scheme of nation-wide music education, however, must be preceded by a pronounced change in

viewpoint and a more liberal conception of their functions as instruments for the dissemination of a comprehensive and practical knowledge of music. College authorities must come to a realization of the true educational and spiritual values of music as vital elements of a cultured and intelligently appreciative citizenship. This realization must be so emphatic that they will be eager to devise and promote methods by means of which these values will be made available for the people generally.

The time is ripe for an aggressive attempt to open the eyes of college authorities to a recognition of their opportunity and responsibility. Two pernicious beliefs, one held by educators, the other by musicians, which have been obstacles in the way of securing unprejudiced consideration for music as an element of popular education, have been shattered. No college man, who really seeks to know the truth, can continue to believe that the practice of music does not demand the exercise of brain power. Nor can the observant musician still claim that music conveys its message only to the limited number who possess exceptional musical talent. The developments of recent years have laid bare the utter falsity of these misconceptions of music.

II

THE COLLEGE AND MUSIC EDUCATION

The place in our educational system occupied by what is denominated the small college is well known. So fully recognized is it that its usefulness has been seriously impaired by a multiplication of institutions calling themselves colleges but inadequate in equipment and financial resources, and woefully deficient in ideals. More than a half-million young people enter these institutions each year. This half-million students live in an environment of miniature world activities and intense community interests. They become permeated by the college ideals. Their modes of thought are so colored by the college atmosphere that their outlook on life is materially changed. After one to six years of such experience they return to their respective communities carrying with them the viewpoint and methods of their alma mater. These they infuse into the life of their communities, touching many times their own number and extending the influence of the college far beyond its own narrow limits. The power of such an agency cannot be other than tremendous.

Practically all these colleges maintain departments which profess to give a complete education in music. Not more than twenty per cent. of this half-million student body are enrolled in the music departments of these institutions. The courses offered are prepared with the production of performers in view. They deal largely with the technical side of the work, leading to solo performance. A varying amount of instruction in theoretical subjects is included, but, in the majority of instances, nothing is offered that has for its purpose the education of the non-specializing music-lover. Thus the eighty per cent. of the half-million student body is untouched by the work of these departments. Beyond the giving of a few concerts, which the majority of them are unprepared to understand, much less appreciate, little or nothing is done to develop in them powers of true appreciation similar to those developed in literature. The educational value of the work done by the small percentage of college students who come under the direct influence of these music departments is questionable, for it is notorious that standards in these departments vary to such a degree that, as educational factors, they frequently are not only inefficient, but even positively harmful. Undoubtedly these institutions have exerted considerable influence on the music life of the country, but too often it has been baneful. As media for developing a truly musical nation they have signally failed. Here we have one of the most influential of all our educational agencies not only failing to measure up to its opportunities for promoting one of the most valuable of our civic assets, but, too generally, interposing itself as an obstacle in the way of true progress. Were the true functions of music education understood and emphasized in these institutions and the work in music so organized and directed as to present to the entire student body the essentials of music understanding and appreciation, this half-million students, thoroughly imbued with a love for music and well-trained in its practical expression, would return to their respective communities and, coming into intimate contact with many times their number, would spread a gospel of music appreciation that would leaven the whole national lump.

There is a reason for the failure of the small college to do for music what it is so effectively accomplishing in other educational fields. In view of the admitted value of music as a national asset and the earnest efforts now being made to extend its beneficent influence, it is important that the cause for this failure be discovered. The onus for it has been pretty generally laid upon the

musician. He has been accused of being egotistic, narrow-minded, lacking in breadth of culture and too indifferent to subjects and conditions outside his specialty. He has been condemned as having misconceived the purposes and processes of music education and for entering too soon upon specialization in his overweening desire to produce performers and professional musicians. He has been criticized for limiting the operations and possibilities of music education to the comparatively small number who display exceptional musical gifts. In fact, the indictment against him covers every count of the failure of the small colleges to meet their responsibilities as disseminators of music education. That there is truth in these criticisms may be admitted, but if the characteristics and attitude of college authorities and the members of the liberal arts faculties be subjected to a similar scrutiny, would they, who dominate college attitudes and methods, escape unscathed? Let us attempt such a scrutiny, not with a spirit of captious criticism, but in an effort to learn the truth concerning the conditions which control the work in music in by far the greater number of small colleges.

III

THE COLLEGE ATTITUDE TOWARD MUSIC

The attitude of college authorities toward the music department practically determines, at the outset, its educational policy. In the majority of such institutions the music department is considered to be the money-making branch of the college business economy and is organized and managed with that purpose in view. Its courses are arranged to attract students who will pay substantial fees, bringing in immediate financial returns. The members of the music faculty are engaged with this thought in mind and their box-office value is a predominant consideration governing their engagement. Anything in their professional equipment that lends itself to attractive advertising, not excluding any personal idiosyncrasies that may serve to increase the "pull" of this publicity, is an important item in their favor. Their ability to turn out performers, their own degree of specialization and their promise of attracting pupils who will increase the revenues of the department, to the enrichment of the college treasury, are more seriously estimated, and more publicly exploited, than is their possible possession of progressive educational ideals and their ability to put these ideals into practical application with

the student body as a whole. So pronounced is this commercial attitude that it is not unheard of for a conscientious and forward-looking instructor in the music department who strives to broaden the musical policy of his college at the risk of possible loss of immediate revenue to be rebuked by the college head, courteously, of course, but none the less decisively. This commercial attitude dictates the amount of work assigned to each instructor. Thirty to forty hours of actual lesson-giving a week is not an exceptional assignment. Such a schedule leaves neither time nor energy for self-culture or for contributions to the broader educational development of the department.

This commercial attitude is in strong contrast to the policy which obtains in the academic department of the same institution. Here it is expected that in working out higher educational ideals deficits may occur. Academic instructors are not supposed to pay their own salaries and provide a sizable surplus as well. They are limited in the number of hours of class-room work, conserving some of their time and energy for self-improvement. They are expected to continue their studies and collateral reading. They are encouraged to devote time and thought to the general educational activities of the institution and to do their part in stimulating cultural aspirations among the students. The attitude of the authorities here is truly educational. It recognizes possibilities beyond the routine of teaching and gives opportunity for their realization. Endowments are earnestly sought to cover deficits and supply means for extra-educational effort. The department carries on its work in an atmosphere of collaboration and mutual respect. From the stimulus of this atmosphere the members of the music faculty are excluded. Their subject too frequently is denied respectful consideration. It is classed among the educational superfluities, tolerated because there is a demand for it by those who are willing to pay generously to secure it. Instructors in music are not admitted to the faculty circle on a basis of educational equality. They are, perforce, made into specialists. Their department is a special one; it is a commercial, not an educational, proposition.

Yet when specialization is mentioned, it does not require much more than a scratching of the surface to discover that much of the criticism directed against musicians in this particular applies with equal force to their academic confrères. One of their own number has rather forcefully drawn attention to this fact in a recent issue of a leading magazine. Discussing "What do Teachers Know," he cites the procedure of the would-be *Ph.*

D. While the candidate for this degree is "boring, face down, into his problem, the world floats by in the clouds, and he is about as aware of its floating as a lamprey is aware of logarithmic functions." And, continues the writer, after investiture with the degree, he continues to develop his specialty still indifferent to the general subjects the ordinary man must know. So, it will be found, are many, very many, of those who are filling chairs in literature, history, science and languages in our colleges. Their lack of sympathy with any movement which does not have its inception in their own department, their sometimes arrogant assumption that the sum of all intellectual endeavor is to be found in the subject in which they are interested, and their inclination to insist that a very large part of the college course be devoted to their subject, strongly inclines the criticized musician to wish for the use of the deadly parallel column, the actual characteristics, ideals and demands of critic and criticized being clearly set forth for comparison.

The musician who has been stigmatized as narrow and wanting breadth of culture and has repeatedly been assured of the versatility of his academic colleague, is somewhat puzzled when he hears that colleague openly boast of his ignorance of music. In view of the fact that music is practically omnipresent and has long been a part of the curriculum of the institution of which that colleague is a faculty member, he cannot quite understand the academic ignorance of the most fundamental of the mental and spiritual reactions of the average mind to music. As regards the nature of music itself, its scientific and artistic principles, and the mental processes by means of which music becomes a vital part of one's intellectual and emotional nature, his liberal arts colleague cannot seem even to comprehend that such processes are possible. He finds him apparently impervious to all attempts to demonstrate the exact nature and educational possibilities of music, and as he struggles on in his efforts to overcome the handicaps under which music teaching in the college has labored, he cannot avoid becoming impressed by a conviction that his liberal arts colleagues are dominated either by prejudice or by so intense an inclination to a specialization of their own that they in no wise differ from those whom they so freely condemn. The musician's efforts to utilize academic means for developing the cultural aspects of music will be met with an indifference and lack of coöperation that decidedly limit their success. He is expected to show interest in the lectures and similar cultural activities of the academic department, but similar activities

projected by him will emphasize the academic indifference. Catholicity of taste is demanded of the musician, but, so far as it is to include music, it evidently is not expected of members of the liberal arts faculty.

The commercial attitude of college authorities and the indifferent and not infrequent hostile attitude of the liberal arts faculty sufficiently explain the failure of the small college to perform its true functions as a developer of a musical nation. Were this attitude one of cordial interest and hearty support, and the determination of the college to make of music the educational force it should be, made clear by the authorities, the musician would be compelled to rise to the situation. Those already anxious to do such work would increase and perfect their efforts, while those who, as yet, do not realize their mission as educators would be compelled to do so. These conditions, however, do not include all that must be overcome. A third, fully as disturbing, confronts the head of a college music department. A pedantic adherence to certain pedagogic formulæ, revealing itself in the emphasis placed on the letter of scholastic law at the expense of the true spirit of education which deals with the formation of character and the sharpening of one's outlook on life, prevents a just estimation of music as an instrumentality in the development of the understanding and intelligent critical power and as an element in the adjustment of college students to the environment of later life. The craze for the cramming of facts, for exact information, for what is called scholarship, has loaded the curricula of our colleges with subjects which are a waste of time so far as any help they bring to the later problems of living is concerned. Even in so important a subject as literature long hours are spent on phases which no stretch of imagination can connect with the future welfare of the student. One is strongly tempted to believe that many of these courses are included in order to afford the *Ph.D.* an opportunity to lecture on his specialty rather than to contribute to the humanistic development of the student. This pedantic tyranny is responsible for the action of a certain university in asking for the resignation of some of its instructors because they are not *Ph.D.'s*. Their work is satisfactory, their methods of teaching are not condemned, but they are to be discharged and *Ph.D.'s* employed in their stead, because of the pedantic worship of a degree that is a badge of extreme specialization. When such a policy dictates the action of college authorities and exact information is valued much more than intelligence and a humanistic attitude toward life

and its problems, the introduction into college methods of an educational use of music which emphasizes and practically applies its cultural values is a remote possibility.

IV

ADJUSTMENT NECESSARY

Surely, here is a situation calling for correction. If music be possessed of power to elevate society, to assist the people to adjust themselves to their environment and to reduce friction in their contact with the experiences which grow out of conditions under which their lives are spent, it should be given the fullest opportunity to exert such power. And if, for the development of this power, a knowledge of music beyond the superficial singing of popular songs and the playing of jazz by bands and orchestras is necessary, so potential an agency as the college should do its part to make education in music possible to all who desire it. No single educational agency outside the public schools exerts so powerful an influence on a larger proportion of the population than does the small college. Its contact with its clientèle is made when they are at an age when maturity, beginning to assert itself, strongly reinforces the impressionability of youth. If the conditions here described exist to any degree, they should be removed and the small college made to function properly as a medium for bringing music education to the masses of the people. Improvement in isolated instances—and there are institutions fulfilling their musical mission—will not remedy the evil; readjustment must be inaugurated and carried forward as a definite and encompassing educational movement.

The policy which converts the music department of a college into a purely commercial organization, minimizing its educational possibilities by making impossible the offering of courses that appeal to those who would know enough music to understand and appreciate it as they do literature, must give way to the truly educational ideals of the academic department. Its instructors must be engaged because of their ability to develop music-lovers rather than half-baked virtuosos. Without lowering the standard of their especial musical equipment these instructors should be selected with reference to their grasp of educational processes and their sympathy with the extension of the musical message to the student body as a whole. Considered to be an integral part of the college's educational facilities, such

financial endowment of the music department should be sought as will render it more independent of tuition fees. The atmosphere surrounding it must be such as to animate it with the same educational inspiration as dominates the academic department. Both should be held in equal respect because of their equally important contributions to a well-rounded life. The instructors in the music department must be given the same consideration as is accorded to their academic colleagues. Pedantry must retire before larger and truer conceptions of educational efficiency.